

Flu Symptoms in Kids Come Suddenly, But You Can Act Fast If You Know What to Look For

1. The most common flu symptoms are fever (though not always), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, according to the CDC.
 2. Additional symptoms like vomiting and diarrhea occur more often in kids than adults.
 3. There is no cure for the flu, but doctors recommend vaccination, fluids, rest, steam, and pain and/or fever reducer, and a lot of TLC.
 4. If your child is sick with a high fever, call your doctor to be seen as soon as possible.
- While there's plenty for parents to love about cold weather — snuggly scarves, hot chocolate dates — this time of year also comes with some down sides: runny noses, coughs, and congestion. It's the return of flu season, which the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says occurs between November and March. And, coming off what the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) calls one of the most severe flu seasons on record last year, it's good to know what the flu symptoms are in kids and toddlers, and what to do if influenza invades your house.

Flu Symptoms in Kids Are What You'd Expect

The CDC notes that these are the most common symptoms of the flu: fever (though not always), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (tiredness), and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea, which occur more often in kids than adults.

"However, symptoms can be varied even in one family," says Jen Trachtenberg, MD. "A baby may have a fever, cough, be cranky, and vomit while an older sibling could have a fever, headache, sore throat, and severe aches." Many of these overlap cold symptoms, but they announce themselves differently. "Colds, even really yucky ones, start out gradually," writes Julie Kardos, MD, and Naline Lai, MD of Two Peds in a Pod. "Sometimes during a cold you get a fever for a few days. Sometimes you get hoarse and lose your voice. Usually kids still feel well enough to play and attend school with colds. The average length of a cold is 7 to 10 days, although sometimes it takes two weeks or more for all the nasal congestion to resolve. The flu, on the other hand, comes on suddenly and makes you feel as if you've been hit by a truck. The fever usually lasts 5 to 7 days. All symptoms come on at once; there is nothing gradual about coming down with the flu."

Go to the Doctor Right Away If You See These Signs

Unfortunately, there is no cure for the flu. "Most of the time, the treatment for healthy kids with flu is really supportive care: fluids, rest, steam, and pain and/or fever reducer, as well as a lot of TLC," says Dr. Trachtenberg. But with kids, you can never be too safe. "Some people are at higher risk of complications from the flu and so these people may need to see a doctor, or at least call their doctor's office," says Katie Lockwood, MD. "This includes children under the age of 5, but particularly under the age of 2. Also, children with morbid obesity, on long-term aspirin therapy, immunosuppression, residing in a chronic care facility, or with chronic medical conditions, such as congenital heart disease, asthma, diabetes. Children who are at high risk may benefit from flu testing and antiviral treatment early in the course of their illness." And for kids without these conditions, there are some red flags that signal you should take your kids to the doctor and/or hospital right away: trouble breathing, bluish skin color, dehydration, extreme fatigue, irritability, fever with a rash, or prolonged symptoms. "For infants in particular," Dr. Lockwood notes, "you should take them to the doctor if they're not feeding well, have trouble breathing, are not making tears when crying, or have significantly fewer wet diapers than normal."

Jaime Friedman, MD says there's another benefit to heading to the doctor if you catch on early that something's amiss: "Some doctors will prescribe Tamiflu if they diagnose a child with the flu in the first 48 hours of symptoms. If your child is sick with a high fever, call your doctor to be seen as soon as possible."

The Best Things to Do: Wash Hands and Get the Flu Shot

Of course, the ideal would be to not get the flu in the first place. "The best defense is a good offense, so encouraging good hand-washing is super important," says Dr. Friedman.

Getting a flu vaccine is also a critical step recommended by both the CDC and the AAP. The CDC sadly reports that, of the 179 children who died of influenza-associated deaths last year, about 80% had not received a flu vaccination. Both organizations urge everyone 6 months or older (with a few exceptions) to get a flu shot — at this point, the AAP recommends the shot over the FluMist nasal spray (LAIV4), which wasn't as effective as the shot last year. A vaccination isn't a guarantee that your kids won't get sick, but, even if they do, it helps. "Kids who have had the flu shot but still get the flu are at much lower risk of complications or death from the flu," says Dr. Friedman. Yes, it's a big ouch upfront, but it might save a lot of pain in the long run.



Last year in the United States:

- 1 in 10 babies was born prematurely.
- March of Dimes invested \$2.9 million in local programs to help moms and babies.
- More than 380,000 babies were born prematurely.
- We invested \$19.3 million in research to fight for healthy moms and strong babies.

The March for Babies community bands together to fight for the health of all moms and babies. We raise funds and awareness so that we can solve even the toughest problems. We celebrate our collective wins as we celebrate our 80th anniversary as an organization. When you March for Babies, you make a statement about the world you want to live in—one in which healthy moms and strong babies are a priority for us all.



EVENT INFORMATION

Oglebay Park
Saturday, April 13, 2019
Registration: 11:00 am
Walk starts: 12:00 pm

Lace up your sneakers and join over 400 Northern Panhandle residents who will take the 3 mile stroll through Oglebay Park for stronger, healthier babies. March for Babies provides a memorable and rewarding day for the whole family including a family fun area, music, face painting and more.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Every March for Babies participant is a leader who has the power to make a huge difference for families. The Northern Panhandle March for Babies event is looking for individuals who wish to be a champion for babies by chairing the event, joining an executive leadership team, or providing sponsorship. By uniting the community, we're building a brighter future for us all. If you wish to learn more about our volunteer leadership opportunities, please reach out.

Please contact Sam Alkire with any questions or for more information 412-506-8621 or salkire@marchofdimes.org

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